

Energy Star Building Standards Benefit Homeowners and Builders

By Michael Keckler, Public Information Officer, Idaho Department of Water Resources

Over 200 Idaho builders, subcontractors, realtors, appraisers and building officials will converge on Boise later this month to learn how to take advantage of the increasing demand for Energy Star® building standards. The 2005 Idaho Builder Conference will focus on how builders can avoid expensive mistakes. If you are in the market for a new home, it could be costly for you not to at least consider an Energy Star home.

Energy Star homes save their owners an average of 30% on yearly energy costs, which over time can multiply into thousands of dollars in savings.

Utilizing the latest in building science technology, Energy Star builders frame their homes with 2x6 studs instead of 2x4's. Deeper walls allow for more insulation including the kind that can be blown into even the tiniest places. Ductwork is sealed and wrapped to prevent leaks and, whenever possible, located in conditioned spaces so that warm air doesn't travel through freezing crawl spaces and cool air doesn't flow through scorching attics.

Energy Star windows are scientifically designed to keep heat in during winter and keep it out during summer. Furnaces and air conditioners are also properly sized to prevent energy waste. All of this is coordinated by a state certified Home Performance Specialist who works with the builder to ensure the home meets the Energy Star standard and to prevent problems from occurring that could delay the home's certification.

Upgrading to the Energy Star standards increases the price on a 2,000 square foot house by about \$2,000. An investment upfront, that will pay for itself in the first couple of years as energy costs continue to rise.

More new homebuyers are taking that into account with each passing year. In 2004, the Idaho Energy Division certified 44 Energy Star homes. In the last quarter of the year, 470 people inquired about making their next home as energy efficient as possible. One of many reasons why Idaho Energy Division officials expect to certify many more Energy Star Homes in 2005.

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The move toward Energy Star started in the Treasure Valley. Now, builders in the Pocatello and Idaho Falls areas and in the Coeur d'Alene region are recognizing the growing market and are getting the necessary training and certification required to become Energy Star builders. They'll learn a lot when they attend the builder's conference later this month in Boise. As a potential customer, your lessons in energy efficiency and how it can save you money can begin with a click of a mouse. The Idaho Energy Division has an entire website dedicated to Energy Star. Visit it today at: www.idahoenergystar.com

It is the goal of the Idaho Energy Division to see the Energy Star standards available in all parts of Idaho. This goal can become reality, only through increased consumer demand, and that takes you.

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